

Esad Kurtović, *Iz povijesti dubrovačkoga zaleđa* [From the History of Dubrovnik Hinterland]. Dubrovnik: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Dubrovniku, 2018. Pages 247.

The book *Iz povijesti dubrovačkog zaleđa* by Esad Kurtović, one of the most prominent medievalists of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a more than welcome contribution to the study of medieval history of Bosnia and Hum, but equally so of Dubrovnik and its contacts with the hinterland. Dispersed in journals, the articles have been collected and expanded for the purpose of this volume, and arranged in the following chapters: »Bišće i Blagaj u doba vojvode Sandalja Hranića Kosače« (Bišće and Blagaj during the rule of Duke Sandalj Hranić Kosača, pp. 9-30), »Naselje Grebci u srednjovjekovnoj župi Popovo« (The settlement of Grebci in the medieval parish of Popovo, pp. 31-55), »Monte lapidoso - Kameno brdo« (pp. 57-68), »Iz povijesti Kreševa u srednjem vijeku« (From the history of Kreševo in the Middle Ages, pp. 69-92), »Magarci u dubrovačkome zaleđu« (Donkeys in the hinterland of Dubrovnik, pp. 93-111), »Učenje dobrih običaja, manira i pismenosti« (The teaching of good customs, manners and literacy, pp. 113-120), »Iz povijesti pčelarstva u dubrovačkome zaleđu« (From the history of bee-keeping in Dubrovnik hinterland, pp. 121-137), »Iz povijesti sokolarstva u dubrovačkome zaleđu u srednjem vijeku« (From the history of falconry in Dubrovnik hinterland in the Middle Ages, pp. 139-156), »Posjed Kosača na otoku Šipanu« (The Kosača estate on the island of Šipan, pp. 157-166) and »Zlatarići - trgovci iz Goražda« (The Zlatarići – merchants from Goražde, pp. 167-181). The book is supplemented with an index of places and that of names.

The key to understanding the manifold aspects of Bosnian Middle Ages lies in the unique Dubrovnik Archives. Dubrovnik Republic, a tiny and well-organised state, has left trace of its own inhabitants but also of the others, including the neighbours. The scribe's hand often recorded numbers, dates, quantities, sums of money, and naturally, the names of people who filed claims against each other, who bequeathed property to their heirs, but also debts, business ventures, occasionally ending in failure. As much as Esad Kurtović's book is a story from Dubrovnik, based on Dubrovnik sources, it is a story about Dubrovnik and its past from a specific historiographic perspective of a historian from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Besides analyses, this book abounds in transcribed archival material for which it deserves great credit. The link with Dubrovnik has not only been established through archival sources from the State Archives in Dubrovnik. This is also a story about certain territories which in medieval times were ruled by the magnates of Bosnia and Hum, to be later integrated into the territory of the Dubrovnik Republic. Therefore, the book will not only be useful to the historians researching into the history of the lands in Dubrovnik's hinterland, but to all those interested in medieval history of Dubrovnik.

Kurtović's book contains valuable comparative material which contributes to the better understanding of specific settlements and parts of the Dubrovnik territory. For example, the chapter on Bišće and Blagaj, seats of Bosnian magnates, helps grasp the context of the establishment and role of the medieval Sokol Castle in Konavle, which came under Ragusan rule in the fifteenth century. Or, a clearer picture of the development of Osojnik as a borderland village may be obtained by highlighting its first neighbouring village across the border, Grebci, in the medieval parish of Popovo. In this chapter the author has reconstructed sketches from the lives of dozens of local inhabitants, which alone is a commendable effort.

The culture of travelling in medieval times, or more accurately, high-risk spots along the routes, may be grasped by reading the chapter on *Kameno brdo*, a locality notorious for brigandage.

Lively economic contacts between the inhabitants of the Dubrovnik area and the hinterland are exemplified with numerous contracts, such as sale or pasture contracts of bees, cattle, sheep

and donkeys, but also contracts involving the hiring of hinterland labour or apprenticeship. Some of these contracts have unexpected amendments from which, for example, we can learn of an individual literacy tutelage fee.

Apart from business contracts, one of the important sources for studying medieval economy are the criminal records, which Esad Kurtović used abundantly. This 'dark chronicle', which by virtue of its nature has been preserved in great volume, ought to be interpreted as an exception and not as rule in the economic and other social relationships.

Two family stories found their way into Kurtović's choice of Ragusan topics, that of the Zlatarići from Goražde and of the Kristići, merchants from Kreševo. The members of both families were successful businessmen. Radoje Kristić nicknamed Kozoje was a Ragusan citizen and able silver merchant. Had he lived a century or two later, his success in business, developed network of associates and family ties, would probably have qualified him for the Confraternity St Lazarus, an elite membership of Ragusan wealthy citizens.

In the chapter on Kozoje, in an indicative sentence, Esad Kurtović reveals certain aspects of his view of the research preferences of the majority of historians of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It appears that because of their partial knowledge of the role and path to Ragusan citizenship, and I may rightly add, their inability to understand dual identity, Radoje Kozoje, tagged as "alien", was somewhat neglected and cast aside by the historiography of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Historians dealing with the acquisition of feudal estates will doubtless benefit from an interesting chapter on the Kosača estate on the island of Šipan, more precisely, on their vineyard.

The most flamboyant chapter is devoted to birds: their breeding, training, sale and hunting role. The falconers, as evidenced by the sources from the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, often came from Konavle. As Konavosko polje frequently flooded in the past, it was an ideal natural environment for various bird species, including birds of prey, which on the high cliffs of Mount Sniježnica overlooking the field found perfect nesting places.

By publishing the select studies of historian Esad Kurtović, Dubrovnik branch of *Matica hrvatska* has contributed to a rewarding presentation of medieval studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Croatian public, grounded largely on Dubrovnik archival sources.

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